

PRACTICAL
LECTURES
ON THE
Church Catechism.

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The FOURTH EDITION.



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TO THE
publisher of the Rev. Mr. ADAM's
LECTURES.

SIR,

Would advise the reader, before he peruses the following pages, to consider well our Church Catechism, and particularly observe the following (Question and Answer therein,) *viz.* Why then are infants baptised, when by reason of their tender age, they cannot perform them? — Answer. — Because they promise them both by their Sureties; which *promise*, when they come to Age, themselves are *bound* to perform.) Then they will read them without prejudice, and have a clearer view of the design of the Author's impressing this duty on persons of riper years, and be sensible that what is therein laid down, is a full explanation of the Church Catechism, free from any ambiguous interpretation.—And if viewed in it's proper light, I doubt not but many well disposed persons will receive benefit therefrom.

W H T O T

2. МАГАЗИНЫ И РЕСУРСЫ ПО ПОДДЕРЖАНИЮ

INTRODUCTION

2912

TO THE

Parishioners of WINTRINGHAM.

My dear Friends and Neighbours,

HAVING drawn up these Lectures upon the Church Catechism, chiefly for your benefit, and in discharge of my office amongst you ; I now take this method of making them better known to you, and would gladly bespeak your favourable attention to them. Which I have the more reason to hope for, as I can truly say they are published by the advice, and at the repeated request, of some persons of knowledge and experience ; who judged they might be of service to the cause of religion.

I commend you to God's blessing in the reading of them; in whose hands a well-meant attempt may be to you, and others, the favour of life unto life; and with my hearty prayers that it may be so, desire you to accept this public testimony of my respect and concern for you; who am

Your servant in the Lord.

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P R E F A C E.

I HAVE only one or two things to desire of the Reader, by way of Preface. One is, that if he is a real christian, pressing into the kingdom of God, he would not quarrel with me for a form of expression, or peculiarity of opinion; differing perhaps from his, in one or more points, not of the essence of religion; but that we may strengthen one another's hands in the great point of turning to God, according to the faith of Christ, in the way of an inward work, under the influences of the spirit.

The other is, that if he be a formalist, or outward professor only, and has never been stirred up to seek after the redemption that is by Christ in the deep ground

of his heart ; he would consider seriously with himself, whether religion, according to the plain meaning of the Bible, is not *Conversion*? and whether any kind of religion, which leaves him just where it found him, without working any change of his tempers, and affections, can be pleasing to God, or a ground of his present and future happiness.

PRACTICAL LECTURES ON THE CHURCH CATECHISM.

LECTURE I.

IDESIGN, with God's help, to go over the Church-Catechism with you briefly.

Not so much in the way of an exposition, as to teach you how to apply it, and bring it home to yourselves ; by turning it into so many heads of self-examination.

That, if it please God, we may see and consider whether we have yet made a right use of the excellent instruction afforded us in it ; by laying it up in our hearts, and converting it into the nourishment of our souls. To give you some understanding of what I mean ;

The Church-Catechism is a short and plain instruction in these several points :
1. The christian covenant. 2. The chri-

tian faith. 3. The christian obedience. 4. The christian prayer. 5. The christian sacraments. Now,

Do you remember so much as the words of this short instruction? and if you do, have you a proper understanding of it? Did you ever meet with any difficulties in it? and if you did, was you careful and desirous to get them removed? Alas! alas! I fear many of those to whom I am speaking, cannot truly say thus much for themselves. God help us the while! for it is a sad reproach to us who call ourselves christians, and would take it ill not to be thought so, to be so ignorant of the great truths of our most holy religion, as we generally are. But now observe what I say. If we had never so perfect a knowledge of it, and of all the particulars of our duty, yet if this be all—if we rest here—with all our pains we have done just nothing. Our knowledge is still in the head, where it can do us no good.

The end of all divine knowledge is practice and self-application. It is intended to be the touchstone of the heart. There it is that it must do its work in us; and there it is that we must work with it.

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If I have a right understanding of the *christian covenant*, do I willingly receive it, and have I entered into it in the presence of God?

If we know what we mean, when we say—*we believe all the articles of the christian faith*;—do we also *believe to the saving of the soul*? Heb. x. 39. Do we content ourselves with barely believing; or only thinking that we believe, when indeed we do not; or is our faith a living, working principle in us, from God; producing *christian obedience*, and all the fruits of a holy conversation?

We all know that *prayer* is a duty of the highest importance. And perhaps we may go so far toward the quieting of conscience as to use some daily form of prayer. But is our prayer an inward work? is it the prayer of the heart from what we feel of our misery and corruption? Do we ask spiritual blessings of God with the same true, earnest desire, that a person ready to perish with hunger would ask for bread; as knowing within ourselves that we are undone, if God does not grant what we pray for?

We say, the *christian sacraments* are necessary to salvation. But do we look well to the end and design of them? Have we, since we came to years of discretion, turned our baptism into a true covenanting with God? Is the sacrament of the Lord's supper precious in our eyes; as the memorial of Christ's body broken, and his blood shed for us, by which alone we obtain remission of our sins? Do we come to it with holy desires, and hearts full of gratitude; as the token and seal of God's mercies to us in Christ? And do we use it as a means of grace, and of building ourselves up in our most holy faith?

Thus it is we should draw nourishment from scripture, from sermons, and from all kinds of religious instruction. And if we do not thus bring all we learn home to ourselves, it will be no better to us than an idle tale. If we had never so exact a knowledge of the way of salvation, and of all the points of christian doctrine, it would be the same to us as no knowledge; it will never bring us one jot nearer to God, and the christian happiness. The one thing necessary is conversion; and conversion comes by self-application; I mean, as begun, and carried on, by the holy spirit.

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In this view then, I shall speak to you for a few Sundays upon our Church Catechism. As I told you before, at this time, rather to enforce than explain it. A word or two in season, if it pleases God, may reach your hearts; and that is what I aim at.

The first of the five parts which I told you the Catechism is divided into, is the *christian covenant*. We are told, what is God's part of this Covenant, and what is ours. What he does, and will do for us, and what we engage on our parts to do for ourselves; or rather consent, and desire He should do in us, *Heb. viii. 10—12*. God's part of this covenant is, that all who truly take upon themselves the profession of the *christian religion* by baptism, are made *members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.*

Know for certain, that it is an unspeakable mercy of God to man, in his condemned, fallen state, thus to prevent him with his goodness. To offer him a covenant of peace; to forgive his sins; to take us into himself by Christ; to make us his children by adoption, and heirs of everlasting life. I say again, unspeakably great is the mercy of God towards us! Indeed so great as

almost to stagger our belief of it. When we consider our own unworthiness, we can hardly persuade ourselves of the truth of what is told us. But that it is so, we may be fully assured by these plain scriptures, amongst many others—*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ; for by one spirit we are all baptised into one body, 1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones, Eph. v. 30. We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ, Gal. iii. 26, 27. And if Children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.*

And the meaning of all such expressions as these is, that we, who are by nature children of wrath; dead in trespasses and sins; and utterly unable by any will or power of our own, to help ourselves out of our wretched condition of weakness, corruption, and total alienation from the life of God; are by being taken into Christ, made partakers of his nature; as a limb, or member, has the same nature with, and is nourished by, it's body, or a branch by the tree to which it belongs. God sees us in

in Christ as parts, or members of his body; or as he does Christ himself. And pronounces of the whole body — Christ the head, with all his members — *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased.* By virtue of our union with Christ, we stand before God clear of all blame; as children and servants of his family and kingdom; to have a new heavenly life and nature wrought into us by the in-dwelling of his spirit; to be enabled by continual supplies of his grace, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called; Eph. iv. 1. and be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; Col. i. 12.

Well then; is all this glad tidings to your fainting soul? A welcome and seasonable relief to you in your perishing condition? And do you indeed value these privileges more than all the world? Or are you careless and unawakened, and altogether ignorant of these matters? Or do you resolve to trust to your baptism, though you neither consider the terms, nor look after the blessings, nor make good the engagement of it? You say, you are a member of Christ. Then you have received the forgiveness of your sins. For no man can be a member of Christ in his natural state,

state, and with the guilt of his sins upon him. But are you in him by a true and living faith; nourished by him as a member of his body, and growing up in him into a new man? Was there ever a time when you came to him with hearty concern, or earnest desire for the remission of your sins? And did you ever apply it to yourself, and beg of God to apply it to you; as an inestimable mercy, and nothing less than life from the dead? You say, you are a child of God. But is your heart towards God, as the heart of a loving and obedient child is towards its father? desiring to please him, fearing to offend him, and resigned to his will? You say, you are an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven. But is the bent of your desire towards your heavenly inheritance? Do you chuse it for your portion? And resolve, by the grace of God, to secure your title to it, whatever becomes of your concerns in this world.

Dearly beloved, just so far as we are acquainted with such an inward work as this, will our baptism be a benefit and a blessing to us. But if we only learn the words of our Catechism when we are children; and soon forget it; and think

no more of it; at least not in the way I am shewing you; our baptism is no baptism, let us be baptised when we will; whether in our infancy, or at man's estate, unless we can be members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, without knowing what it is to be so, or ever concerning ourselves about it; or at the same time that we are slaves of sin, and have a heart for nothing but the world.

Learn then to apply the Catechism in this manner. Search the scriptures together with it. Think with yourselves, that if you are not *members of Christ*, &c. by your own act and deed, and by a real covenanting with him, when you are of age for it, you are undone for ever. And then think with yourselves, whether you are so now, or have any desire to be so. And may God convince you of the greatness, and necessity, of the salvation offered you in Christ, and bless you in your endeavours of turning to him.

LECT. II.

I Have told you that my design in speaking to you upon the Church-Catechism, is not only to explain it where it may be necessary, but chiefly to teach you how to apply it ; and by means of it to bring the matter betwixt God and your souls to some issue.

And I pray God you may not deceive yourselves with a vain hope of being christians, or in a way to obtain the christian reward ; when perhaps many of you do not so much as remember the words of this short instruction, or, if you do, content yourselves with barely knowing it, without bringing it home to yourselves, and examining your consciences by it.

Short as it is, let me tell you it contains matters of very high concernment to us ; and therefore what we had need be well-grounded in ; if we expect any benefit, or comfort from our religion. The chief points it offers to our consideration and belief, are such as the wisest men upon earth could never have arrived to a knowledge of,

of, without the help of God. But what, now they are revealed, all with his help may, and upon the peril of their souls must, know; let them be never so simple, and undearned. All consists in a willing and well-disposed mind; for such God himself will teach, by *putting his laws into their minds, and writing them upon their hearts*, Heb. viii. 10. And if any are ignorant of what is necessary to salvation, when they have such a teacher to go to; let them pretend what they will, there can be but one true reason for it, viz. That in the bottom of their hearts, that do not desire the knowledge of his ways.

The several parts into which the Catechism may be divided, are 1. The christian covenant. 2. The christian faith. 3. The christian obedience. 4. The christian prayer. 5. The christian sacraments.

The first of these is the christian covenant. And God's part of this covenant we are told is this—That all who truly take upon themselves the profession of Christ's religion in baptism, are *members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*. And if you remember what I told you of the great unspeakable

able mercy of being taken into God's family and kingdom, as well-beloved children; when we were dead in trespasses and sins; members of the devil's kingdom; and could do nothing to help ourselves in our sad condition of misery and corruption. That by virtue of our union with Christ we are partakers of his nature, of his life, holiness and sonship; and looked upon God as such; as parts, or members, Christ's body, in whom he is well pleased. I say, if you rightly understand this, especially if God has given you the grace to apply it, you will be disposed and desirous to know what is your part of this covenant; and what you must do to secure your title to such invaluable blessings.

And for certain, our part of this blessed covenant is no other than what is here told us, viz. *That we are to renounce the devil and all his works; the pomps and vanities of the wicked world; and all the sinful lusts of the flesh: To believe all the articles of the christian faith: To keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the day of our lives.* — A short word upon each of these heads, by way of explanation, may be as much as is necessary. If the heart is ready, the understanding is soon informed

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But so long as that continues hardened, or
know of belief, no instruction either of God
or man will take place.

1. *We promise to renounce the devil and all
his works*—That wicked spirit, whom the
scripture calls the *Prince*, John xiv. 30.
and the *God of this world*, 2 Cor. iv. 4. Be-
cause this world, by the permission of God,
is the place where he exerts his power and
malice; and because by the sin of our first
parents, he has gotten but too great a do-
minion over the souls of men, *and leads too
many of them captive at his will*, 2 Tim. ii.
6.—Together with the whole crew of
fallen angels, whom he drew after him in
his revolt, and rebellion against God. And
who, as St. Jude tells us, *are reserved in
everlasting chains under darkness, unto the
judgment of the great day*, ver. 6. From
whence we learn, that there is a large com-
pany of wicked spirits, who are fallen from
God, and have lost their happiness for ever.
What their particular crime was, I do not
now that scripture any where informs us.
But we have reason to believe it was *Pride*,
A casting off their dependance upon God,
and a proud imagination to be great and
powerful, wise and happy in their own
strength. This was actually the snare he
laid

laid for our first parents—*Ye shall be as Gods, &c.* Gen. iii. 5. He knew but ^{too} well how successful an engine it would be to compass their ruin, and therefore probably it was the sin by which he fell himself. And besides, we know that nothing so fatally separates between God and the creature, as pride; I mean a proud conceit of our own strength, wisdom, or righteousness. And nothing can preserve our union with God, or promote our return to him, but humility. Let this be a warning to us; and keep us very low in our own eyes. But what it concerns us more especially to know of the devil, and his angels, is, first, that sin, persisted in, will as certainly separate us for ever from God, as it has done them; and as certainly expose us to the vengeance of eternal fire. Secondly, that their nature is so wholly changed from what it was, that instead of being good, and happy, and glorious creatures, as they once were, they are now cruel and revengeful; full of hatred, and spite, and malice to God, and to his whole creation, they take pleasure in making fools and slaves of as many as they can. They employ all their pains, and strength, and subtlety, in deceiving and ruining mankind; and in a perpetual war against God and goodness.

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And therefore we are under a necessity of renouncing either God or them. We must abhor their nature ; dread their power ; and guard against their wiles. If we would be the children of God, and heirs of his kingdom, we must be faithful in our, allegiance, and subjection to him : We must fight manfully against his, and our great enemies ; and resolve by the grace of God, to keep ourselves at the greatest distance from all those accursed tempers, which make the devil what he is ; are a present hell within us, and will be our tormentors for ever : viz. pride, malice, envy, revenge, lying, and evil-speaking ; from which last quality, if you do not know it, the devil has his name. For the word Devil signifies a slanderer, or evil speaker.

2. *We also promise to renounce the pomps and vanities of this wicked world. And, 3. all the sinful lusts of the flesh.* I will tell you briefly what I think we are to understand by these expressions.

The world is wicked as lying in wickedness. 1 John v. 19. That is to say, as the generality of those who live in it at all times, are either engaged in vain and sinful

ful pursuits ; or greedy of what they call the good things of it ; making them the chief end and aim of their living ; getting them too often by unlawful methods ; or however spending all their time and pains about them, so as to be forgetful of their eternal interest, and the great end of their creation. And the things of this world, great abundance of the conveniences of life ; its riches, honours, and pleasures, are stiled *pomps and vanities* ; as having a gaudy appearance, dazzling the senses, and looking fair to eyes of flesh and blood. But without any real worth and goodness in them ; contributing nothing to the true happiness of man ; but for the most part hiding it from him, and depriving him of it. And therefore to be suspected ; desired with moderation ; and used with caution. As having a fatal tendency to steal away the heart, and draw off our affections from God.

In this sense, therefore, the world is to be renounced,—despised, dreaded, abhorred—that is, all such thoughts concerning it, ways of using it, or living in it, as may any ways hinder, prejudice, or ruin our future happiness. The foundation of which, according to the whole te-

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nor of scripture, must necessarily be laid here, in such holy affections as are suitable to it.

3. By the *Flesh*, you are to understand, according to the general use of that word in scripture, the old man; the natural man; the whole nature of man, soul and body, in his present degenerate, fallen state, as despoiled of the image of God, in which he was made; as turned from God, and giving the strength of his heart to the creatures; darkened in his understanding, corrupt in his will; and so long as he continues turned from God in the bent of his desires and affections, necessarily sinful; and tending only to misery. [See Dr. *Bray*.]

And the *Flesh*, with its *sinful lusts*, is to be *renounced*; that is to say, the state here described, and continuance in it, is above all things in the world to be dreaded; as displeasing to God, and the death of the soul. And the single aim, earnest desire, endeavour, and application of the whole man is to be turned against it, and a strong cry raised in the heart after deliverance from it; with a full purpose and determination to put ourselves into the hands of God, to be purged and sanctified. That

so being *renewed in the spirit of our mind*, Eph. iv. 23. and recovering in some good degree the original perfection of our nature; that is, being turned in the bent and inclination of the soul to God, we may be qualified to enjoy him, by first making him our choice. Which cannot otherwise be. For happiness of any kind undefired, is impossible, and a contradiction in nature.

We also promise to believe all the articles of the christian faith; and to keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of our life. But these will be considered when we come to speak of the *christian faith, and christian obedience.*

And I should now, according to my proposed method, teach you how to apply what has been said at this time; and exhort you to bring it home to yourselves, by turning it into so many heads of self-examination. But this will be the business of another Lord's day.

In the mean time consider what has been said: Think of these things with that seriousness, which your great concern

cern in them demands of you, from this moment to the last hour of your breath.

Judge of your religious state, by your willingness to be instructed, and real desire to profit what you hear. And the Lord give you understanding in all things.

LECT. III.

THE Church-Catechism having instructed us in the nature of the *Christian covenant*; the great blessings made over to us in it on God's part; and the engagements we bring ourselves under on ours; calls upon us in the next place to bethink ourselves, whether we do indeed purpose to fulfil these engagements, and to act suitably to so great a mercy—in this home question and answer.

Q. Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe, and do as they have promised for thee?

A. Yes verily; and by God's help, so I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father that he hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace that I may continue in the same unto my life's end.

Here is nothing to be explained: but a great deal to be considered, and well applied.

plied. This is all heart-work. It is the will that must do all here. If we have never so great a knowledge of our religion, we can only mock God, and cheat ourselves with an empty profession, till our wills and affections are brought over to him. But if any man desires to know his will, that he may do it, the spirit of God will take him in hand, and work with him in the right place; I mean in the depth of his heart; where only the knowledge of God and divine things, can do him any good.

Take especial notice then,—for I speak it with great confidence—that poverty, or a low and laborious station of life, is no bar to the true Christian knowledge. Many, it is true, are sadly ignorant of what it concerns them above all things in the world to know. But then it is because all is cold and dead within them. Their hearts are averse to it; their affections, and their whole soul is otherwise engaged. If they were but as inquisitive about their everlasting happiness, and as willing to know the way to heaven, as they are to thrive and prosper in the world, they might soon be wise unto salvation.

Do not then put all from you, and give up your title to the precious mercies of God, by saying that you are poor and unlearned. You can know as much as is necessary, if God can make you to know it. Read what St. *Paul* and St. *James* say of God's calling and choice of the poor of this world; and let it forever stop your mouths, 1 Cor. i. 26—31. Jam. ii. 5. Do you who say this, use the means of knowing; and take the same pains to do it, as you would in a matter which you thought very nearly concerned you? Do you advise with your minister? Do you think much, and with great concern of your soul? Do you make a conscience of profiting by all you read, or hear? Lay your hand upon your heart, and see what you have done, or are doing in this great and weighty business of your eternal salvation, before you charge God foolishly.

Indeed, my friends, the simple turning of the heart to God is all in all. And this, with the help afforded to all, is as much in the power of one man as another, let their station in the world, and knowledge in other respects, be what it will. And this turning of the heart and will to God, wherever it is real, brings God with all his power and love

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into every soul of man; by as certain and natural a working, as the milk flows from the breast into the mouth of a child.

Yes verily; and by God's help so I will.
 —Are you then indeed come thus far on your way? Do you sincerely purpose and resolve with the help of God to believe and do, if they had not promised for you; mothers promised for you in your baptism; and what you are bound to believe and do, if they had not promised for you; and what for certain you must do, if ever you be partakers of God's mercies in Christ? Or, do you hear these questions and answers, which in few words set before us the nature of the Christian covenant—the privileges of a Christian on the one hand, and his duty on the other—with as little thought, and understanding, and true concern for yourselves, as you repeated them when you were children?

I know it sticks with many, to say, as our church does, that children are regenerated with the holy spirit, and born again in baptism. I have no desire to unsettle you in this point, as you will perceive before I have finished these Lectures. But

let this be as it will, we may bring the matter to a speedy issue with ourselves. Whoever they are, who do not faithfully, and understandingly ratify this covenant in their own persons ; and answer to the whole, and every part of it—*Yes verily ; and by God's help so I will*—their baptism is no baptism. They are yet in their sins. It can avail them nothing to have been once the children of God, if by their indifference they since make it appear, that they set no value upon so glorious and happy a distinction.

Understand me well. I do not speak only of the vilest of mankind ; adulterers, fornicators, thieves, drunkards, common swearers, &c. such as have cast off all shame and fear, and have their sins written in their foreheads. But whoever they are, who have little or no concern about their interest in Christ ; and do not close heartily with him for all his benefits, from a deep conviction of their want of him : If they have had no experience of a working-time with God in the depth of their souls ; and were never inwardly stirred up to call upon the name of the Lord, and lay hold of the salvation he offers them ; if they have no such sense of the

the evil of their state and nature, as to desire earnestly to be delivered from it, and resolve to put themselves into the hands of God for that purpose, and to do all in their power to help forward their recovery;—let them be what they will in other respects, they are only children of this world; they walk on still in darkness; *are still in the flesh, and cannot please God,* Rom. viii. 8.

Brethren, here it is we should try ourselves. This is the searching, convincing point. Religion is an inward work of God upon the soul, distinctly known and felt. And whatever comes short of this, leaves us in the darkness and deadness of our natural state. It is true, insisting upon real, inward conversion by the power of God, always did, and always will, give offence; especially to those who have a fairer outside than others; and if they have no gross sins appearing in the life, think nothing of sin in the heart. Which is by far the most dangerous, as being the hardest to be known; what we are unwilling to know; and more so to have removed. But I *must* speak, whether you will hear, or whether you will forbear. I know that

gospel-light is troublesome at the first. It pinches close ; and frets our spirits ; and bears hard upon our pride. And, if ever it does its work, must turn all upside down within us. And if what I say to you, both now and at other times, was to give you no disturbance, I should conclude at once that I was false to my office among you, and guilty of keeping back the truth. I will speak it again ; it is no more than what this answer of our Church-Catechism gives occasion for ; and who knows but God may speak too ?

What then does thy heart say ? Is it the inward thought of thy heart, that thou art bound, as ever thou wilt answer it to thy soul, to believe and do these things ? To believe that God is thy Father ; Christ thy Redeemer ; and the Holy Ghost thy Guide and Sanctifier ? Dost thou purpose, as in the presence of God, to keep his holy will and commandments, as revealed to thee in scripture ? Does the state of salvation, which thou art called to through Jesus Christ, appear to thee to be so seasonable a relief, and so necessary for thee in thy fallen, sinful, helpless condition ; that thou dost clearly resolve for the sake of it to renounce

nounce the Devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh ; that is, to dread, hate, and despise every thing that wou'd turn thee from God, and steal away thy heart and affections, and hinder thee from attaining to his grace and mercy in Christ ? And dost thou heartily thank God for calling thee to this state of salvation ? And pray for grace to continue in it unto thy life's end ; so as thou dost wish and pray for nothing else ; as knowing that it is the one thing necessary ; all that God can do for thee, and all that thou shou'dst desire for thyself ; and that if thou dost come short of it, thou art undone for ever ?

See then what answer you can make to these things. Consider what it is which our Church requires of all its members. Not an outward form, but a real, inward working towards a thorough change of heart and life. Being turned in the bent of our hearts towards God. And so persuaded of our want of Christ, and of God's covenant of peace in *him* ; as that when it is offered to our choice, and we are required to answer whether we will ac-

cept it, or no, and do every thing on our part to secure our interest in it ; we may say boldly, and with a thankful heart, —
Yes verily ; and by God's help so I will.

And may God bring you to this resolution, and enable you to keep it.

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LECT. IV.

THE second of the five parts into which the Catechism is divided, is the *Christian faith*; contained in the Apostles Creed. So called not because it was composed, or drawn up in its present form by the apostles themselves; but because it is a summary of the doctrine they taught; and contains in a short compass all that is necessary to be believed. For herein we learn, 1. *To believe in God the Father; who made us and all the world.* 2. *In God the Son; who redeemed us and all mankind.* 3. *In God the Holy Ghost; who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God.*

These particulars rightly understood, thoroughly believed, and well applied, are, in the judgment of our church, the sum of the Christian faith, and sufficient for every one's salvation. Without this belief, there is no being a Christian. More than this we need not; and less, the meanest must not have.

If then you are ignorant of these great points of Christian belief; and find in yourselves no desire to be well-grounded in them; do not deceive yourselves. The fault is in your wills: and your ignorance is criminal in the sight of God.

I. The first great article of the Creed, is belief in God: in two respects. 1. *As the Maker of the world, and all things in it.* 2. *As the Father.* The first of these is common to all mankind; Heathens, Jews, and Christians. The second is revealed to Christians. And the revelation of God to them under the character of a Father; as it is expressive of the duty and love they owe him; so it is their peculiar privilege; their joy and triumph; the support and comfort of their lives, *Rom. v. 11.*

The first of these, viz. *That God is the Maker of the world, and of all things in it,* is common, I say, to all mankind. They have an unavoidable sense of it upon their minds; by tradition from our last parents, and natural apprehension; confirmed moreover by their own reason. The frame of the world; the structure of our bodies; the growth of the least pile of grass; the regular return of the seasons, summer and winter,

winter, seed time and harvest ; the reasonable soul within us ; every thing about us, and belonging to us ; done for us, and in us ; brings in such strong and plain evidence of an all-powerful, and wise God, who made and governs the world ; that all are alike persuaded of it ; learned and unlearned, the highest and the lowest. All believe with as much certainty, and fullness of conviction, that they have their life and being, and the support of it from God, as that they live and move at all. And accordingly all the nations of the earth have always agreed in acknowledging the being and providence of God ; the homage they owe him, and their dependence on him, by some kind of religious worship.

But then here manifestly comes in a very wide difference. For besides that the heathens had a multitude of gods ; *gods many, and lords many*, as St. Paul lays, 1 Cor. viii. 5. and worshiped the work of men's hands, wood and stone. I say, besides this gross idolatry, with which mankind was almost universally infected before the coming of Christ ; and we of this nation as much as any ; the worship they paid their gods, was only upon a worldly

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ly account; for temporal blessings; outward plenty and prosperity. As our Saviour himself plainly intimates, Matt. vi. 32. when he says, *of all these things do the Gentiles seek*: meaning, that they looked for nothing else from the hands of their gods but worldly things; that it was the burthen of all their prayers, and addresses to them; that they had no sense of the darkness that was upon their minds; or desire of being made partakers of the divine nature, by knowing and being known of God as the God and father of their spirits.

2. Whereas in the Christian revelation God offers himself to be known and received by mankind under the title and relation of a father; the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: And in him of a spiritual race of children; *begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pet. i. 3—5. Redeemed from the vanity of a mere worldly life; giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure, by escaping the corruption that is in the world through

through lust, 2 Pet. i. 10. and worshipping God in spirit and in truth, Joh. iv. 24. That is, with the heart, by his spirit, for spiritual blessings.

And as this is so glorious, and comfortable an article of our faith ; and so necessary a distinction of a Christian, that without it we are no better than heathens, whatever we may think of ourselves ; let us now see how we should consider, and apply it ; and judge of ourselves by it.

St. Paul, Rom. viii. 15. speaking of the difference of Christians from what they were in their former, unconverted state, makes it to consist chiefly in this ; that they *had received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father.* And again, Gal. iv. 5, 6, 7. he lays it down as the great point, and principal end of redemption that *we can now call God, father, by the spirit of his son given into our hearts.* For sonship implies all; favour, and protection, and support. And by being taken into the state of children, we become *heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.* Being sealed with *the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, Eph. i. 13, 14.*

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Do you then thus believe in God the father ? That he is your God and father in Christ ? He is your maker and father by creation ; and so by necessity. But have you taken him for your father by your own free choice ? Do you rejoice in him as such ; rest in him, and make him your blessedness, and final end ? Is the offer which the Lord almighty makes you, of being your *father*, *of walking and dwelling in you*, and taking you for his *sons and daughters*, 2 Cor. vi. 16, 18. so precious to you that you prize it above all the world, and think it the great privilege, and necessary consequence of your high calling in Christ ; to have the *spirit itself bear witness with your spirit*, that you are the children of God ? Rom. viii. 16. First by his grace and mercy ; that you may be so by similitude of nature ; and a new creation to his image in righteousness and true holiness.

Thus, I say, we shou'd think of this article of our creed ; and judge of our religious state according to our inward sense and belief of it. For God is either a reconciled father in Christ ; or out of him a consuming fire. And we must either walk before God as dear children in love, believing

ing and rejoicing in our adoption; or groundlessly presume upon his mercy; or be under a continual dread of his justice. The first of these is the Christian state; the second is a state of dangerous, carnal security; the last is a slavish state, full of fears and terrors; and, if we think of God at all, will destroy the comfort of our lives.

Know then the mighty blessing of being able to call God, Father. And that not receiving him into our hearts, as such; freely reconciled to us; no longer entering into judgment with us; and waiting to fill us with all spiritual blessings in Christ; is the same thing in scripture account, Eph. ii. 12. as being *without God in the world.*

It is true he is the common friend and father of the universe: He sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust; and doth good to the evil, and unthankful. But he therefore loads us with his benefits in this life, and does good to our bodies, that we might seek him in a better capacity, if haply we might feel after him and find him; that is to say, in his gracious presence in our souls. Compare Acts xiv. 17.

xvii. 27. And if we only worship him as the God of our bodies, who giveth rain and fruitful seasons ; he is still an unknown God to us. We do not yet know him in the way he desires to be known of us ; and in which alone he can be our God to all eternity.

Whenever then you repeat this article of your Creed, remember to press it upon your minds in some such manner as this. Is God my father ? Does he take me into his family, and treat me as a beloved child ? This is mercy inexpressible to corrupt, undone creatures ; who were alienated from him, and in a rebellion against him. May I never be so foolish as to neglect my title to it ! But then I know if God has the heart of a father towards me, it is that I may have the heart of a child towards him ; that I may love and fear him, and resign myself wholly to his pleasure in all things. And if I neither am, nor desire to be thus affected towards him, I mock him, when I call him my father ; and set no value upon my being his son, and an heir of God through Christ.

I say,

I say, for the love of God bring all home to yourselves. Do not always go on in a careless way. Do not live and die, in the utter neglect of what so greatly concerns you. Is all within you ready to bless and praise God for the *great love wherewith he loved you?* Eph. ii. 4. Do you rejoice in the sense of his love? Rom. v. 11. And feel so much of it in yourself as to know that it is more to be valued than thousands of gold and silver? Then you are happy; then you are a Christian; then *the earnest of the spirit is given into your heart,* 2 Cor. i. 29. And *you are sealed unto the day of redemption,* Eph. iv. 30.

On the other hand, whoever they are who have cold and lifeless notions of this great article of our faith; if they make no account of having God for their father; or at the best think more of him as the God of their bodies than of their souls, and of their father which is in heaven; where their treasure and inheritance is, and where their hearts should be;— they are **not** Christians; they are not yet in Christ. For all who are so *bless God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;* Eph.

Eph. i. 3. rejoice in their sonship; and long to know and love God more and more.

May God bring us to his son; that he may bring us again to God, washed in his blood; and reveal him to our hearts, as a gracious, reconciled father, Mat. xi. 27.

LECT. V.

OUR church sums up the apostles creed in these three articles. 1. *Belief in God the Father, and maker of heaven and earth.* 2. *In God the Son, the Redeemer of all mankind.* 3. *In God the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God.* The belief of these points is so necessary, that it is a vain thing to think of being a Christian without them.

And by the belief of these articles, I do not mean barely repeating, or assenting to them; and so thinking no more of the great concern we have in them. But receiving them into our hearts; living under a constant, habitual sense of them; being so persuaded of the will of God for the salvation of all, and every one of us in particular, according to the glorious gospel of Christ, as to rest our souls upon it; to look for our great comfort from it; and pray continually for our establishment, and increase in it.

The first of these, viz. *belief in God the Father,* I have already spoken to, and am now

now to speak of, the other two, viz. *belief in God the Son, the Redeemer of all mankind; and in God the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God.*

II. When therefore you hear that *God the Son redeemed you, and all mankind*; think thus with yourself—What was the state and condition of mankind to require such a redemption? How did Christ redeem me, and all mankind? And what must I do to be a partaker of his redemption?

1. In answer to the first of these—The state and condition of mankind was sinful; yea they were *dead in trespasses and sins*, Eph. ii. 1, 5. The first man by sinning lost that image of God in which he was created; from that moment his true life departed from him. And *he begat his children in his own likeness*, Gen. v. 3. That is, in his own fallen likeness of misery and corruption. Insomuch that naturally they have neither the power nor the will to restore themselves to their first happy state in God. And this is to be understood not only of some few of the worst of mankind, but of all in general. All without exception are conceived, and born in sin, Pf. ii. 5. Rom. v. 12—19. 1 Cor. xv. 22.

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Jo. iii. 6. And in their natural state, *without God in the world*, Eph. ii. 12. Let their outward conversation be what it will; though they are good-natured, orderly, and civil in their behaviour towards others; whatever degree of credit they may live in; whatever they may think of themselves; they have an evil heart, and an evil nature. For *that which is born of the flesh is flesh*, Jo. iii. 6. and nothing else; miserably weak and corrupt; destitute of all true spiritual feeling, and does not seek after God. And therefore *they that are in the flesh*, as every unregenerate son of Adam is, *cannot please God*, Rom. viii. 8.

Look well to your sense and belief of this matter. For if you are not grounded in the notion of a Fall; so as to know from your own experience, that one man is as truly in it as another; you will neither understand the gospel, nor put in heartily for your share of the redemption that is in Christ. For,

2. *We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of our sins*, Eph. i. 7. Col. i. 14. Observe it well. This I say, is the manner of our Redemption; even the forgiveness of our sins. Which does

not only imply the forgiveness of all sins to all men; but the necessity of every man's being saved, that is, restored to the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life, by an act of forgiveness on God's part. Christ according to the will of God, and by his own free oblation of himself, gave himself up to death that *we might be reconciled to God by the Cross*, Eph ii. 16. and *be made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. And he did not shed his most precious blood upon the cross for the great sins of some; and the small, trifling sins of others; but for such sin in all as deserved God's wrath and damnation, [Art. 11.]

3. So that if ever we be partakers of the redemption that is by Christ, we must first pronounce the sentence of condemnation upon ourselves; abhor, and cast from us for ever all thought of our worthiness, and even harmlessness; and receive our whole salvation from first to last by faith, as the grace and gift of God to every man; which no man upon earth could ever attain to by any natural power of working, or righteousness of his own; * and without which

* Before this expression is condemned as too harsh by any believer of Scripture, I would recommend to his

which the best of men are but just saints enough to be undone.

III. But then as Christ by his death hath delivered us from the wrath of God, and *blotted out the hand-writing that was against us*, Col. ii. 14. so to crown all, and complete our faith in the Trinity of persons in the Godhead; each performing their several parts in the work of man's redemption; we also profess to believe in God the *Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth us, and all the elect people of God*. For, *Christ redeemed us from all iniquity*—From the

his very attentive consideration the important lesson of instruction, held forth in the story and character of Job. That he was a person of extraordinary virtue is undeniable. The reality of it must be taken for granted, as the ground-Work of the grand conclusion to be drawn from it. But then he had an undue opinion of his own righteousness. And it is very evident to me, that the one, plain scope of the Book, —in concurrence with all scripture, in which there is a surprizing unity of design,—is to show him to us humbled, and self condemned; in that remarkable confession, which casts so strong a light upon the book; and draws the whole of it to a point; and is enough to strike terror into every soul of man, viz. *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes, chap. xlvi.* 6.—And the reflection arising from it is this; where is the man that can stand upon his saintship with God? or be excused from the necessity of self-abasement, and self-condemnation, if Job could not?

charge of sin standing in full force against us in our unredeemed state—that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14. We are chosen in him to sonship, and a state of grace, that we might be partakers of the divine nature, by the operation and indwelling of his spirit. Whose office it is to *convince the world*—the whole world—of sin, Jo. xvi. 8. And by that conviction to bring them to God, by Christ, for forgiveness; and work in them all those holy tempers, which make up the new man of the Gospel; humility, meekness, patience, purity of heart, and the love of God and man.

And thus it is that the Holy Ghost is our comforter, and the Lord and giver of life. These are the things which must renew our spirits; and make us *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*, Col. i. 12. This is the peculiar privilege, and great promise of the gospel times; and probably what our Saviour had an eye to, when he said, *He that is least in the kingdom of heaven*—in the Gospel state, or dispensation of the spirit—is greater than John the Baptist, Matt. xi. 11. who did not live to see it take place. Compare

pare Lu. x. 24. Jo. v. 20. vii. 30. xiv. 12. And whoever comes to Christ with any other belief or expectation, than to be made holy by him, and raised by his spirit to newness of life, his belief is vain ; he does nothing but trifle with God, and his own soul ; sin never was a burthen to him ; and not being felt as such, never was repented of ; and without repentance there can be no true faith in Christ.

But though we believe that holiness is a necessary part of our salvation ; and that our sanctification is altogether by the power of the Holy Ghost ; yet we do not so account of that holiness, whatever it is ; when we have done all we can, and the very best we can, and God has done all that he ever will do for us, and in us ; as to make it the ground of our acceptance to the reward of eternal life. For Christ alone, who is *the Lord our righteousness*, Jer. xxxiii. 16. has merited this for us. And if ever we be found of God in peace, without spot and blemish, 2 Pet. iii. 14. it must be by being found in him ; not having—not trusting in—our own righteousness ; but that which is through the faith of Christ, *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 9. who best

knows what our righteousness is ; and that man is capable of no reward, till he has humility enough to disclaim all merit in himself ; and renounce the wretched folly of bringing God, as it were, to a reckoning with him. God can only make himself a debtor to his own promise. And *the promise is by faith of Jesus Christ to them that believe, the scripture having concluded all under sin*, Gal. iii. 22. And that not without reason, most certainly, because all are sinners. And therefore it is well for the unmeriting, sinful creature *Man*, that he has the security of God's infallible promise for his everlasting happiness. See Rom. iv. 16.

Now then, consider as in the presence of God—What are these things to us ? examine yourselves whether you be in this blessed faith of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; three persons and one God ? ever working with unwearied patience, and universal love, for the salvation and recovery of fallen mankind ? What has our belief done for us ? Is it in the head, or in the heart ? Is it a living, or dead faith ? Is the love of God *shed abroad in our hearts* ? Rom. v. 5. Is God indeed our *father* ; the Son our *redeemer* ; and the Holy Ghost our

our *sanctifier*? And do we clearly resolve in the power of almighty grace, *to count all things but dung that we may win Christ*? Phil. iii. 8. Or are we careless, impenitent, sleeping worldlings? outwardly professing the religion of Christ, and offering up our prayers in his name; but refusing to admit him, with his ever blessed spirit, into our hearts; and framing excuses to ourselves for not coming in upon his call?

I say again, examine yourselves concerning the great salvation of the Gospel; and see whether you apply it to your souls; so as to live in the comfort of it; and rejoice with exceeding great joy because of it, as the wise men from the east did, *when they had found the child Jesus*, Matt. ii. 10. For we must either *magnify the Lord for his mercies, and rejoice in God our Saviour*, Luk. i. 46, 47. or at least be inwardly stirred up to seek after him by Christ, before we can have hope toward God. And if we are doing neither of these, let us not think that any kind of outward life will be accounted to us for righteousness.

Go on no longer in this common mistake. *Search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are so*, Acts xvii. 11. Give your hearts to God in the reading of them, with earnest desire to have them opened to you. And if they do not reveal God to you, as your Father; the Son, as your Redeemer; the Holy Ghost, as your Sanctifier; if they do not bring you to this confession and belief; then judge those as severely as you please, who declare these things to you as the burthen of all scripture. But this I am persuaded you will not do, if you search it in sincerity; and give way to the discoveries it makes to you to God and yourselves; and bring your hearts to be tried by it.

As for the other articles of the Apostles creed, they are so contained in these three principal ones, that if once we are well-grounded in them, we shall of course live and die in the belief, practice, and comfort of all the rest.

The *Birth and Sufferings of Christ*, his *Resurrection, Ascension, Sitting at the right hand of God, and coming to judgment*, will employ

employ our devout meditations, and be fruitful lessons of instruction to us.

We shall no longer consider ourselves as members of a corrupt world, but of Christ's *holy Catholic Church*; which he hath redeemed to God by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people, and nation, Rev. v. 9.

We shall be joined together in the *communion of saints*; or one bond of holy brotherhood, holy services to God, and hearty love to men, under Christ our head; with all the saints on earth, and the blessed company of saints and angels in heaven.

Rejoicing in the *forgiveness of sins*.

In sure and certain hope of the *resurrection of eternal life*, through our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our *vile body* that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, Phil. iii. 21.

Amen. So be it. May God confirm us in this faith. May it be to us the power

of God unto salvation, Rom. i. 16. Holy and eternal Trinity, illuminate, sanctify, and renew us to thy image. Grant, O God, that as children of thy family and kingdom, we may obey its laws, promote its interests, embrace its sufferings, partake of its blessings, and welcome death as the door of admission to all its enjoyments.

LECT. VI.

THE third part of the Catechism is concerning *Christian Obedience*. Which our church sets before us in the *Ten Commandments*, delivered by God to *Moses*, Ex. xx. and in the answer to those two questions—*What is thy duty to God, and to thy neighbour?*—Supposing that these Ten Commandments, rightly understood, contain the whole of our duty: And that if we make them the constant rule of our actions, and obey them from the heart, we shall do all that is required of us; and keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man.

I shall not at this time go over them severally by a particular explanation. But, according to my design, apply myself to your hearts and consciences. For if these are not first rightly disposed, no obedience will follow; though we had never so exact an understanding of the Ten Commandments in their whole, spiritual extant. And if they are, we have a principle within us, which will infallibly guide the

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most simple and unlearned into all necessary knowledge ; and keep them steady in the practice of their duty at all times, and upon all occasions.

And in speaking of this matter, I shall also, with the help of God, shew you the nature of *Christian Obedience*. That so no careless persons may mistake it ; nor the sincere, and well-disposed, perplex and torment themselves with unnecessary scruples ; as if *Christian Obedience* was impossible ; but serve God with a quiet mind, and go on cheerfully in the strength of gospel comfort.

Here then is your touchstone. What does the Lord thy God require of thee, O man ? Why certainly, nothing less than is here told us, viz. *To believe in him ; to fear him ; to love him with all the heart, with all the strength, and with all the mind ; to worship him ; to give him thanks ; to put our whole trust in him ; to call upon him ; to honour his holy name, and word ; and to serve him truly all the days of our life.*

You, who say you are poor and unlearned ; meaning by this, that you have neither time nor abilities, to know what

God

God requires of you in order to your everlasting salvation ; and seem resolved to venture your souls upon this pretence ; what is there in these words which you may not understand ; and, with the help of God, apply ? And if you do not consider, and bring them home to your own case, how can you persuade yourselves that the fault is any where but in your wills ? The most learned may, and do neglect this self-application ; and forget God, as well as the meanest. But then the plain reason why one man knows and serves God more than another, is not because one is more, and another less learned ; but because one does, and the other does not, chuse to receive him into his heart.

Taking it for granted, then, that God's laws are given to all ; and equally binding to all, let their state and condition in the world be what it will, under no less a penalty than death eternal ; let me ask you, Do you bring your hearts to be tried by God's holy word and commandments ? Can they bear witness for you that you keep a strict watch over yourselves, and live under a continual sense of God's presence, authority, and fatherly care over

you? Do you so believe in him as to love him with all the heart and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and with all the mind? Knowing assuredly, that this can imply no less than delighting in him; desiring to be like him; wishing to enjoy him; and dreading above all things in the world to do any thing that you know will displease him? Do you worship him, not with the fruitless offering of a lip service; and with your bodies only for your bodies; but in the continual bent of your hearts, as the God and Father of your spirits, where only he can bless you, and be a God to you? And do you pray to him for all you want; and praise him both for what he gives, and what he refuses; quietly leaving all your concerns of soul and body in his hands, to be ordered by him as he pleases?

Take notice, this is not any over-strict doctrine of mine; but our church's sense of the four first commandments respecting God, called the *first Table*. Nay, it is the word of God, as you cannot but know. And moreover bound upon us under a curse, as you may read, Jer. xvii. 5. *Cursed is he that in his heart goeth from the Lord.*

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Suppose now that with respect to the six last commandments, or *second Table*, we could truly say, not only that we do no harm, but much good; yet this would avail us nothing before God. Still here is the first and great Commandment of *loving God with all the heart, &c.* standing out in full force against us; and striking us dead with a charge of sin. For the pride of our hearts, great as it is, cannot so far deceive us, as to make us believe that, generally speaking, we come any thing near the observation of this command. And therefore in our own defence we must take up, as I fear we do, either with a blind persuasion that we love God, when we do not; or that God both must and will abate something of the rigour of his law; and that though he enjoins obedience under the penalty of a curse, yet in the main he is regardless whether we obey him or no.

But surely, O man! this is thy own wretched mistake, and perverseness of heart. Surely this is thinking foolishly of God. Who does not come down to our weakness, so as to leave us what he finds us; for that he knows would be to ruin us. And it would be much more unworthy of him to do so, than it is of

a wise man to humour a child in such follies as lead to his destruction. The end of God in all his dealings with mankind, is to help them out of their wretched state of weakness, and corruption; and to bring them back again to himself in holiness. By bringing us up to the rule, and not the rule down to us. By enlightening our understandings to discern the wisdom, and fitness of *all* his commands; swaying our wills and inclining our affections, to embrace and pursue the good he offers us.

Let us then consider deeply, as ever we would be Christians, the children and friends of God, that the *commandment is holy, and just, and good*, Rom. vii. 12. proper to exalt, and purify our natures, and qualify us to live with God in heaven; and therefore necessary, and indispensable. It is an easy thought, and what no man of common sincerity, and understanding, can have the least doubt of, that as God loves us and knows what is best for us, so he cannot deceive us; but tells us the truth; and can possibly have no other design upon us, but to bring us to the best end by the best means. And that if we set up our own wills, and imaginations against

against him, we chuse darkness instead of light, evil instead of good, and must necessarily be wretched and miserable.

But who is sufficient for these things ? Who can say, I am pure ? I have made myself clean ? *Till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me ; my righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go ?* Job. xxvii. 5, 6. That is, in the sense in which Job spoke it, I will stand upon it to the last before God, and man, that I am an upright, innocent person ?—Alas ! not one. He who was the chosen instrument of God to trace the human heart through all its deceitful windings, and knew both states, of God's and of man's righteousness, affirms boldly, *there is none that doth good, no not one,* Rom. iii. 12. That is to say, so as to BE good, and clear of blame before God. Here the greatest saint that ever lived must lay his hand upon his mouth, and humble himself in the dust. *God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are,* will be no answer to the strict charge of the law. And if we were left to stand or fall for ever by our own righteousness, and the absolute perfection of our obedience, we might well shrink back at sight of the difficulties

difficulties which are before us, and for ever sit down in despair.

Here then comes in the enlightening, healing, saving gospel-scheme; summed up by St. Paul in two points, *Repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ*, Acts xx. 21. Here comes in first the doctrine of Repentance. Here is our proof of the necessity of it in all. Love is the everlasting, indispensable duty of man to his maker. I mean love of him for what he is in himself; love and admiration of those perfections, universal, unwearied patience, goodness, love, &c. which make God what he is; and would make us perfect and happy in our degree, as he is perfect and happy; and without which we can neither take delight in him, nor he in us. And if the sense of our being so unlike him; so forgetful of him; so alienated from him in the deep ground of our hearts; does not fill us with shame and concern, and a just dread of eternal separation from him; and bring us to him in true repentance, and earnest desire of a change; let us be what we will in other respects, we are vile before God; and, if he speaks truth in his law, already condemned.

And

And if to this we add, as we well may, the breaches of our duty towards our neighbour ; our unfair dealings with him ; the slanders we invent against him, or easily take up, and listen to with secret delight ; our anger upon slight occasions ; our envy ; our inclination to revenge, and unwillingness to forgive ; and what is the root of all, our pride and selfishness : We have a still fuller proof of our guilt, and the necessity of looking out for a remedy.

Blessed be the God and father of mercies, CHRIST is this remedy. *He is the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, Jo. i. 29.* He is the great physician of souls, to all who know their need of him ; and come to him sick, and heavy laden, and with a deep conviction of their sinful, helpless condition. And though God is a consuming fire ; and his justice cannot overlook the transgressions of his law ; yet it can be, and is satisfied by the atoning blood, and perfect obedience of Christ ; and our God is again well-pleased with us, for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered for us, and for

for what we are in him ; when once we have received him into our hearts by faith.

But perhaps you will think, — What becomes of our *Obedience*, in this way of pardoning sins by Christ ; and of being accepted in and through a mediator, or surety ? by mercy from first to last, and not at all of merit ? It is not a dangerous temptation to us to believe, that it may be dispensed with, notwithstanding the strictness of the command ; and that some way or other God may accept us without it ? Without the perfection of obedience he may, and does ; without a sincere purpose of it, and continual daily improvement in it, he cannot. But to answer directly to this objection : I say, 1. Faith supposes repentance ; a heart, turned from sin, and a will to all goodness ; and brings us to the spirit for power ; and thus *establisheth the Law*, Rom. iii. 31. And without this it is nothing but hypocrisy, and a lie. 2. This method shews the necessity of obedience ; yea, of perfect obedience. For God's law broken, is not satisfied only by exacting the penalty due to our sins in the person and sufferings of Christ ; but also by having

ing full obedience paid to it by *him* in our stead, as our great Covenant-head. Not to discharge us from our obligations to obedience ; but to convince us of the value which God sets upon it : of his concern for justice, and for the honour of his laws ; to inspire us with a dread of disobedience, and bring our straying hearts back again to him in love ; the only root and spring of all true obedience ; I mean as far as human agency can be concerned ; and without which it is of no value in the sight of God. For, 3. This is the gospel-mystery of sanctification ; God's own method of promoting and securing our obedience ; and appears to all the reason of mankind to be excellently fitted to that end. If the Love of God in giving his son to die for us ; if the love of Christ in emptying himself of his glory ; and humbling himself to take our flesh, that he might suffer death upon the cross, and save the forfeited lives of our souls from destruction, will not bend our stubborn hearts, what will ? If the kindness of God thus wonderfully manifested on our behalf, will not draw from us suitable returns of love ; and engage us in a course of free, generous, unconstrained obedience,

what

what is there left in the nature of man that can do it? Fly to the mercy of God in Christ, with an humble, penitent, contrite heart; and then grieve, and sin against him, if you can. Reject it, and then see what kind of obedience you can force out of yourselves. I will venture to say, you will bring your duty into a narrow compass; and sufficiently pride yourselves in the performance of that little, which generally passes in the world for virtue. At the same time overlooking those gospel graces which constitute the Christian life; are the work of God's spirit in us; make us like Christ; and qualify us for the enjoyment of the heavenly happiness. I mean a sincere love of God and man, humility, meekness, patience, purity, self-denial. These tempers, so peculiarly Christian, and so essential to the new man of the gospel, are too much disregarded even by the better part of mankind; and can only be desired, and experienced, in the power of divine faith.

It is true, *the flesh will lust still against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh*, Gal. v. 17. So that the struggle betwixt them will never be over so long as we are in this world. But then the pardoned

doned soul loves much, because much hath been forgiven, Luk. vii. 47. Its natural language is, What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? It hates all sin, as such; and fights manfully against it. It has respect unto all the commandments; acknowledges the goodness, and necessity of them; and would no more chuse to do less than is commanded, than to be excused from happiness. It does not think that there is no sin in the heart, where there is none in the life; but knows that *not understanding and seeking after God*, Rom. iii. 11. which the world makes but little account of, is the greatest sin of all others; and the root of all evil in us. It has the holy Ghost for its support, and comforter; goes on from strength to strength; grows daily in grace, and in the knowledge and love of God; is encouraged amidst all its temptations, and infirmities, by the sense of forgiveness; desires, and pants after perfection, but expects to be accepted to the reward of it only in Christ; and in this belief finds its greatest comfort; grieving for the remainder of its corruption, but not hindered by it from laying hold on the promises of God.

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Would you then be settled in the truth of *Christian Obedience*? The sum is this; first be convinced of your disobedience; especially against the first and great commandment. This conviction of sin—which is the spirit's first operation, and must necessarily go before all the rest; [consider Jo. xvi. 8—11.]—will bring you to Christ, in humility, for remission. Who by his perfect obedience, and the merits of his death, has condemned sin in the flesh; so that it shall neither rise up in judgment against you, nor prevail over you. And when once you are grounded in the sense of so great a mercy from the Lord, it will win over your whole heart and soul to him. You will study to do his will in all things; and be filled with that *love which is the fulfilling of the law*, Rom. xiii. 10. and the soul of obedience. You will *love God, who hath first so loved you*, 1 Jo. iv. 19. and your brother for God's sake, ver. 11. And you will earnestly beseech him that he would write all his laws in your hearts; as knowing assuredly that conformity to them is health to the soul, and the perfection of our nature; and that nothing can be mercy to you in your fallen condition, but recovery to a state of unwilling obedience; just

as nothing can be mercy to a sick man but a cure. In a word, the sum and substance of the Bible is—*Believe, that ye may obey; obey, and be happy.* And if you are not established in this belief; if it is not the sincere purpose, and great desire of your heart to be purged, and sanctified, as well as pardoned, you trifle with your happiness, and are a deceived man to *this day.*

LECT. VII.

THE Church-Catechism having first instructed us in the nature of the *Christian covenant*; and, secondly, called upon us to rehearse the articles of our belief, in that antient confession of *Christian Faith*, called the Apostles Creed; and, thirdly, set before us the *Christian obedience*, in the Ten Commandments, and the explanation of them, in the two following questions and answers; comes, Fourthly, to shew us the reason, and necessity of diligent *Prayer*—Forasmuch as we can do none of these things of ourselves. We can neither believe, nor apply to ourselves the *Christian covenant*; nor walk in the commandments of God, and serve him truly all the days of our life, without his special grace.

As our salvation is the gift of God to us; so our acceptance of it, and a life framed according to it, must be the work of his spirit in us. And especially if we are not well grounded in a sense of our weakness, and natural inability to practise

tise what he requires of us ; we shall be apt to measure the extent of our obedience by our own narrow capacities ; and fall into the common mistake, that what we can do of ourselves is all we ought to do, and all that God expects from us. Tho' Christ says, *without me ye can do nothing*, Jo. xv. 5. And the prophet Jeremiah, *It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, x. 23.

Know then indeed, O man, that of thyself thou art not able to do these things. Thou art a fallen creature ; corrupt in thy heart, perverse in thy will, and blind in thy understanding. And if ever thou art recovered to God in the way of his chusing and appointing for thee, it must be by having the desire of thy heart turned to him in continual prayer : that he would *work in thee, both to will, and to do, of his good pleasure*, Phil. ii. 13. And if thy own experience has not convinced thee of this, the light of scripture never shined in to thy soul ; thou art yet in the darkness of unbelief.

The commands of God must be obeyed. Faith in *Christ dying for us when we were ungodly*, Rom. v. 6. begets in us an earnest desire to obey them from the heart ;

and a fear of offending so gracious a father and so kind a redeemer. And this faith is itself the gift of God, and must be obtained by prayer, Phil. i. 29. 1 Cor. ii. 12, 14. But nevertheless when the sense of this reconciliation hath so far taken hold of us, that we can truly say, our spirit is willing ; *still the flesh is weak*, Matt. xxvi. 41. We are beset with temptations ; and have powerful enemies to struggle with ; which we can never hope to conquer without the help of God.

And there is no way to engage the power of God on our side, but by *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance*, Eph. vi. 18. For the condition of obtaining help and strength from above is, *Ask, and it shall be given ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened*, Matt. vii. 7. And if we do not comply with this condition, we are neither fit to receive the grace of God ; nor to make a right use of it, if it should be given us.

So that prayer both opens us a way into the kingdom of God, and of Christ ; and is our security for continuing in it, and living in any degree suitably to

so great a mercy. For, as I said before, the commands of God must be obeyed. And if we are not able to keep them of ourselves; as it is certain we are not! it follows necessarily, either that we make no conscience of keeping them; or, that we must be convinced of the necessity of putting our whole trust in God; and keeping close to him by constant, diligent prayer.

Observe then, that when our church says, *My good child, know that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, and to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace;* it gives us the one strong reason of prayer. *Our help standeth in the name of the Lord,* Psa. cxxiv. 8. who can only afford it us. He is ready to give it to all that ask it. And if we have not, it is because we ask not, Ja. iv. 2. I say, what plainer, or stronger reason than this can be given for the necessity of prayer? And who is there that cannot understand it it?

Bodily want, felt, we think one and all to be a sufficient reason for asking. And we are not backward to make our case known to those who we think can and

will help us. And if we do not lay our spiritual wants before God; who calls upon us, and commands us to do it, and is ever waiting that he may be gracious to us; with the same, nay with much greater concern than we desire to have our bodily wants supplied; it is because we are ignorant of them; fearless of danger, and unawakened to a sense of our condition. In the midst of life we are in death, and do not know it.

Learn also from hence, the true spirit of prayer. It is the turning of a penitent, humble, desiring heart to God, for mercy to it in its helpless, fallen state; and for ability to *walk in all the commandments of the Lord blameless*. And without this sense there can be no prayer. If we were to fall down upon our knees a hundred times a day, it would be a fruitless labour. God is not glorified, nor man profited by such empty services. Holiness and happiness is God's glory in man; granted to his desire and free choice. But where this is not, the life and soul of prayer; all our fitness to receive spiritual good things from God, and turn them into a blessing to us, is still wanting; that is, a praying from what we feel;

feel; with an earnest will to experience the power of God in our souls; *turning us fram darkness to light*, Acts xxvi, 18. And quickening us by his spirit to newness of life. One sigh in this disposition, from a hungering, thirsting soul, peirceth the heart of God; has Christ interceding for it; and the spirit *helping its infirmities*; let the man live in what part of the world he will.

It was probably for this reason, that when Christ was desired by his disciples to teach them to pray, he did it in a few words ; and such as tend chiefly to shew with what disposition, and frame of spirit we ought to pray ; viz. for spiritual blessings ; as children to a father, in full assurance of being heard. I do not mean that it is either unlawful, or improper to enlarge in our addresses to God. For the desiring, fervent soul will strive earnestly, and struggle hard for a blessing. But then the greatest length of prayer, uttered without feeling and without meaning, will not prevail with God. When a single wish from a well-disposed will, and an affectionate, longing heart, which stands always bent towards God, will find accept-

ance ; and bring down our help from above.

Have you then considered the weighty reason here given for the use of diligent prayer ; and applied it to your own case ? Does any thing which you know and feel of yourselves ; or that the Scripture tells you of the universal corruption and weakness of mankind ; bring you upon your knees before God, to have your hearts cleansed by the inspiration of his holy spirit ? Do you pray for faith to receive Christ ; and for grace to follow his example ; and is your prayer indeed the very desire of your hearts ? Is the state of your life a state of continual wishing and praying according to the order, form, and spirit of the Lord's prayer ; and reducing all your desires within the compass of it ? — being deeply possessed with a sense of your high calling to a state of sonship in Christ ; Hallowing the name of God in your hearts and lives — waiting for his Kingdom ; and for strength to do, and suffer, his will — Forgiving, loving, and living in charity with all men — Praying to be delivered out of temptation,

tion, and to be kept from the power of evil—asccribing all you have, all you do, and all you are, to him only, whose is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory ; *who is above all, and through all, and in us all.* Eph. iv. 6.—And as for the concerns of this life, leaving them in the hands of God ; and being content with, and thankful for, such things as you have ?

Ah ! my friends ; how can we ever so far deceive ourselves, as to think either that any thing is prayer but the prayer of the heart ; or that a prayerless life is a Christian life ! And a Sunday's religion only, is in truth little better than a prayerless life. If we believed in good earnest, that conversion is the one thing necessary, where we have now one prayer, we should have a thousand, that this great work of the Lord might prosper in our hands. Whatever business we are about, it would be uppermost in our thoughts ; and we should be breathing out many a wish for the grace of God. We should love to pray ; we should teach all that belong to us to pray ; we should pray with, and for our families ;

we should have daily, stated times of prayer; and take all opportunities of joining the public worship of God.

If it is not so—I pray God convince you of the error of your ways! May he come among us, and with great might succour us! And let me beseech you in his name, and by all your hopes of salvation, to turn to the Lord in prayer. *For it is not a vain thing; it is for your life.* The life of our soul demands it of us. They must perish without it; and we need no other token of their being in a dead state, than the neglect of it.

And if there are any here present, who through the brutish neglect of their parents, or others (which all such must sadly answer for to God) were never taught to pray; let me warn them to come as fast as they can out of this wretched, heathenish way; and not only to begin, but learn how to pray. They cannot plead in excuse for themselves, that they know no better. For no doubt they have had many calls to this purpose, both at church, and in the examples of others, and from the inward motions of God's Spirit. They have a loud warning now from me. *And if they will not*

not understand, and seek after God, their blood will be upon their own heads.

And I say to all; be in fear for yourselves, *lest any of you fail of the grace of God.* Heb. xii. 15. Your work is great; your time is short. Know your duty; know your weakness, and fly to the power of God. Remember especially, that those commands which are of such importance, that without them we cannot be Christians; and in which the conversion and recovery of our souls chiefly consists; are withal the hardest; nay, absolutely above all the natural power of man; such as humility, meekness, patience, the Love of God; and such universal, unbounded Charity to men, as can forgive it's enemies; and inclines us to love, and blefs those who hate, and curse us.

If then you truly desire to please God, and profit your neighbour by a holy life; and would have within yourselves a comfortable, and well-grounded persuasion, that you *give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;* 2 Pet. i. 10, *Watch and pray.* Matt. xxvi. 31. *Yea, pray without ceasing.* 1 Thess. v. 17. That is, in the continual bent, and habit of your minds;

that ye may be accounted worthy to escape, and stand before the son of man. Lu. xxi. 36.

And God grant that we may be sober, and watch unto prayer. 1 Pet. 4. 7. And thereby commit the keeping of our souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. ver. 19.

LECT. VIII. and IX.

THE last of the five parts into which the Church-catechism is divided, is the *Christian sacraments*. Of which I shall say something briefly by way of explanation ; and then, according to what I have chiefly in view in these lectures, exhort you to examine yourselves concerning the sense you have of them ; and how far you improve and apply them to the benefit and comfort of your souls.

We are told there are two sacraments, and but two ; that they were ordained by Christ himself ; and are therefore necessary to salvation. Both because they have the force of all other divine commands ; and because they are tokens and seals of God's covenant of grace ; the especial means of assuring and conveying it to us ; and of our entrance into, and growth in the spiritual life. But then you are to observe, it is not said they are *absolutely*, but only *generally*, necessary

to salvation. So that the wilful, whether vicious, or careless neglect of them, will deprive us of the benefits of Christ's religion. The fitness and propriety of them is best known to God; and to his wisdom we must submit. If therefore he has appointed them for the trial, support, and exercise of our faith; as standing memorials of his mercy, and a public declaration of our want of it, and trust in it; we are not at liberty to think the use of them indifferent. They are necessary in virtue of the institution. And it will be in vain to say that they are in their own nature incapable of producing the effects which are ascribed to them. What can sprinkling with hyssop signify to my case? might a Jewish leper have said. Nevertheless, the psalmist, looking thro' the cover of the outward ceremony with the eye of faith, saw spiritual comfort in it; and embraced it as a token of his cleansing from the inward leprosy of sin. Compare Levit. xiv. 4, 7. Psā. li. 7. Thus Naaman *did* say, what virtue can there be in the water of Jordon more than any other; and yet upon trial, he was cur'd of his leprosy. 2 Kings v.

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And thus if it should be asked, how can we be cleansed from the defilement of sin, by washing the whole body, or sprinkling any part of it, with water? How can bread and wine be converted into the nourishment of our souls? The plain answer is, by the sole will and power of God, taking effect thro' the sign; not for any virtue of it's own; but thro' one as well as another, of God's appointment. And he can institute sensible tokens of the necessity of our being thus cleansed, and nourished; of our utter helplessness, and absolute dependence on his almighty grace; as an act of stipulation on his part to apply it; and on ours to receive it. And what we think He *has* thus instituted, our Church Catechism declares to be *generally necessary*; that is, Where these sacraments may be had; and not so as to exclude any from the hopes of salvation, who are unavoidably hindered from partaking of them.

Now for the institution of Baptism by Christ himself, we refer to Matt. xxviii. 19. *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father,*

Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The meaning of which words as they may well be understood according to the original, is—enter all nations in a state of discipleship, into all the hopes, privileges, and powers of the Christian covenant, *BY* baptising them; that is, by means of the outward, visible sign. And for the inward, spiritual grace, we refer to 1 Cor. xii. 13. *By one spirit we are all baptised into one body*; that is, Christ, and his members; partaking of the same life by the same Spirit. And to Gal. iii. 17. *As many as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ*—His sonship, and holiness; what he was himself, what he will be again in us; whenever we are so joined to the Lord, as to be one Spirit with him. 1 Cor. vi. 17.

And if any doubt can remain of Christ's meaning as the use and perpetual continuance of baptism; we read in the Acts of the Apostles; that it was their constant practise to baptise those whom they converted. We know also with infallible certainty that it was continued on

on from them, thro' all succeeding ages; and in the primitive times administer'd with a solemnity, which shews their sense of it's importance, and the great stress they laid upon it. And to convince us farther, how necessary and indispensable it is; and that no graces, or endowments can supersede the use of it; we find that St. Peter baptised *Cornelius* and his company, even after they had received the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost. Acts x. 47, 48.

Suppose now a person fully satisfied about the necessity of baptism, and yet in doubt concerning the case of infants; I would ask him, why he should entertain a thought of excluding them? Considering that neither Christ, nor his Apostles did; and that God expressly commanded the children of the Jews to be circumcised. Which at once cuts off all the arguments that can be alledged for the unfitness, or incapacity of infants being admitted into covenant with God; and shews that tho' repentance and faith are necessary qualifications of baptism to those who are capable of them, yet the want of them is no necessary disqualification

cation of those who are not; any more than the want of a full knowledge and belief of the religion of *Moses* was to the children of the Jews. If it should be said that there is a positive command for one, and not for the other; the answer is, there needed none. As baptism came in the room of circumcision, without any exclusion of infants; it is natural to suppose that no change was intended as to them. Because if there had, it would have been necessary to guard against a mistake as to their case, by an express prohibition; especially as it was the custom at that time to *baptise the children* of Jewish proselytes. But as there is no such prohibition our Church declares with good warrant [Art. 27.] "That the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained:" Seeing that, in St. *Paul's* phrase, the children of Christian parents are clean, or holy, 1. Cor. vii. 14. that is, capable of entering into a state of relative, or covenant-holiness. Which, by the way, is a very pertinent scripture instance of the baptising of children. It being hard to say how they could be clean, or holy, but first by being capable of such a state; and then received

received into it by the proper rite of admission. We know the child of a Jew would not have been reputed holy without circumcision.

But now the great difficulty is still to come.

Whether baptism was ordained by Christ, as the standing method of admitting all persons into a state of discipleship: Whether the grace of God in Christ is thereby signified and sealed to us: Whether infants are to be received to a participation of this grace, or no: Yet what can it profit those, who have no experience of such effect in themselves? And what does it signify which side of these questions relating to baptism they hold, who do not consider the end, and look after the benefits of it?

Did you ever put this important question to yourselves; which all sects and denominations are equally concerned in, and must answer truly upon the peril of their souls—*Have I attained to the new birth unto righteousness?* I know your answer will be, *I hope so.* But then do not

not hope against all reason, and with the strongest appearances to the contrary; with nothing about you but the marks of carelessness and a worldly spirit. Surely where all is at stake, there is but too much need to say to all, Be not deceived. If you are a serious man, come to the trial. What is your hope grounded on? Is it upon your baptism, and christian profession? Or upon an honest, sober life, and fair carriage in the eye of the world? Or great strictness in the outward form of religion? If it is grounded upon any, or all of these put together, without such a change of your inward man, as makes you seek earnestly after God, as your portion; and brings you to him in faith, and longing for his promises; know for certain that you come short of the matter, that is, according to Christ, of salvation. See Jo. iii. 3.

1 Pet. i. 22—25.

It is true, you will find thousands ready to join with your deceitful hearts, in darkening and explaining away this capital Scripture-doctrine of the new birth. But I say again, be not deceived. It is nothing less than the power of God

put

put forth upon the soul (*) to raise it to a state of spiritual growth, working, and feeling ; or, restoration from the fall to that life, which was his image in man at the first ; and which alone is capable of reaching after him ; of being united to him, and living with him to eternity. All the powers of flesh and blood, that is, of man in his fleshly, earthly state, are utterly insufficient for this purpose. And if you take never so much pains to adorn your outward man with a civil, and even saint-like beha-

(*) Eph. i. 18, 12, 20, *That ye may know—what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.* Words so weighty, as not easily to be explained. Nevertheless take the sense of them as thus given by the learned Dr. Hammond—“ Discerning thoroughly the infiniteness of his power that hath been engaged in this work towards us believers, in subduing our enemies, sin, and death the punishment of sin ; and raising us sinners first to a new, and then to an eternal life. Which was a work of the same omnipotence with that he first evidenced in that miraculous raising of Christ from the grave, and exalting him to the highest degree of glory next to himself in heaven ; an emblem and essay of the methods which he hath now used toward us, by the preaching of the Gospel to raise us from the grave of sin to a new Christian life, and from thence to a glorious eternity.

viour ;

viour ; or think that any thing is conversion, but conversion of the whole man by the power of the Holy Ghost, you utterly mistake your case ; and will be in danger of rejecting your remedy. And when I speak of conversion, take notice again, that I do not mean it only of the conversion of notorious sinners ; as if none but such were called to it. But of such conversion as is necessary for all, who never saw their own miserable unworthiness ; and consequently have not yet applied in good earnest to Christ, as the only saviour of all mankind ; the best and the worst. Call our great work under Christ, and his spirit *Conversion, Regeneration, or Faith and Obedience* ; and let the foundation of it be laid when, and how it will ; certain it is that the Gospel calls us to it, offers to work it in us, and that it must of all necessity take place in us. And I pray God convince those of their mistake, who think they are in the new birth for having been baptised, and leading orderly lives with respect to men ; but do not know what it is to repent, and turn to God ; and never came to Christ, as an inward Saviour ; taking away the guilt of their sins,

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sins, and purifying their hearts by faith. Acts xv. 6. xx. 21. xxvi. 20.

Are you then aware of this, as a matter of the utmost importance and principally to be attended to in the spiritual, deep searching religion of Christ; viz. That a great charge, called here in our Catechism, *A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness*, must pass upon every soul of man? And that it can be sought after only in *Repentance*, or an humbling knowledge of our state and nature; and received by *Faith* as the work of God in all, and the gift of God to all? Did you ever ask yourselves what the death unto sin, and the new birth unto righteousness are? Do you take the Scripture for your guide; and consult it carefully to know what is the meaning of these deep expressions; and what cause there is for such a thorough conversion in all, as can only be affected by the power of God? and which is to all intents and purposes a new birth? as it brings on a new state and life; and confers a new nature, attended with new thoughts, new judgments, new resolutions, new hopes, new fears, new relishes; and takes us from

from under the dominion of Satan and our lusts ; and instead of the darkness, beggarly impotence, mean pursuits, and low attainments of the natural man, opens in our hearts the prospect of heaven, the desire of heaven, and the powers of heaven.

I say again, Are you convinced of this as what distinguisheth the religion of Christ from a state merely natural, and from all other religions ; and of the necessity of attaining it ? Knowing in yourselves that you neither have any claim to salvation, nor fitness for it, but as you are received into a state of favour with God through the alone merits of Christ ; and made alive unto God by his Spirit. Do you believe indeed that sin must come to the death in you ; so as that your wills shall be turned against it, and your love of it into hatred ? And that your new birth unto righteousness must prove itself, as every other kind of life does, by such workings and inclinations as are proper to it ? That as a worldly heart and temper fastens upon the world, and it's pleasures, or conveniences, with the full bent of it's desire ; so the new man in Christ, not neglecting his proper business in the world, nor refusing such comforts,

comforts, and conveniences as are consistent with his main end ; has nevertheless quite different things constantly in view ; and seeks the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof in the first place ; striving in the power of divine grace against all his corruptions ; praying earnestly for strength to do the will of God from the heart, and to be kept by the mighty power of God unto salvation.

But you say, does not this heavenly-mindedness, this living unto God by his Spirit, make us neglect our families, and take us off from the duty of our callings ? No. From all carking anxiety it does, and must. But at the same time fixeth us in dependance upon, and resignation to, God ; and makes us more industrious, more provident in an honest way, and more careful of duty to all, than we should otherwise be.

Look well to your great concern, and the true bent of your mind ; and whatever time you give to God and your souls (and you might well give a great deal more than you do) you will so forecast your business, as to lose nothing upon a worldly account. Ask a labouring man, what his heart is chiefly

chiefly upon when he is at work, tho' he does not always think of it ; and he will answer upon his family, and his home at night. If he could answer as readily, *upon God*; his work would be as well followed. And so will your's, tho' you have your eye all the while upon the straight gate. Perhaps the person who makes this objection is a drunkard, or spendthrift, or an idle waster of his time. But whoever he is, does he bring all his time to account? Does he spend none of it in vanity? Does he consider that eternity demands a reasonable portion of it from him, and the steady application of his most serious thoughts? Whatever he may think, his soul is himself, and the well-being of it his all. If he is afraid of having too much concern for it, it is to be feared he has too little. And by standing off from the truth of religion, and rejecting every thing that is good in it, upon a pretence that it will engross too much of his time and thoughts, and be a hindrance to him in his worldly affairs ; he bears witness, against himself, that he is in darkness, and cannot yet discern good from evil.

But some, indeed very many, alledge further; Does not our Church say that we

we are regenerate, and born again in Baptism? And what need then is there to look for the new birth any where else? But can those who say this suppose that the end of baptism is attainted by all, or the greatest part of those who are admitted to it in their infancy? And that what is done for us then cannot be undone, let us live as we please? Does not our church teach us plainly what is the duty, as the privileges of those who are baptised? That *we should follow the example of our Saviour Christ; and that as he died, and was buried, and rose again for us, so should we who are baptised, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness?* Does it not tell us, that the requisites to baptism are *Repentance and Faith?* And that every one is indispensably bound to look well to these qualifications in himself? And is not this telling us that we run the hazard of losing all, if we do not? Take heed therefore of mistaking, and abusing your baptism: Look upon it as the token and seal of God's mercy to you in Christ; *washing you from your sins in his blood;* Rev. i. 5. But *let not sin reign in your mortal bodies,*

dies, Romans vi. 12. As it does according to the whole tenor of Scripture, notwithstanding all the accomplishments of the old man, till you have a new being in Christ; and can go forth *in the strength of the Lord God, and make mention of his righteousness only.* Psalm lxxi. 16. Make not your baptism a pretence for standing still in your Christian course; or for being *as the heathens who know not God.* 1 Thessalon. iv. 5. that is, who know nothing of him but by the bare light of nature; and therefore do not know him in the only way in which he can, and desires to be known by us; as the God and Father of our spirits; *blessing us with all spiritual blessings in Christ.* Ephesians i. 3. In whom alone we are accepted: And quickening us by his Spirit; that so we may be a *willing people in the day of his power* Psalm cx. 3. Making a free surrender of our hearts to him from a sense of his love; *strengthened with might in the inner man;* Eph. iii. 16. and *shewing forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light.* 1 Pet. iii. 9.

Now

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.
Eph. iii. 20, 21.

LECT. X, and XI.

OUR Catechism sets before us these several things concerning the *Sacrament of the Lord's Supper*. 1. That it was ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby. 2. That under the outward sign of bread and wine is signified to us the body and blood of Christ. 3. Which is verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful. 4. That our souls are strengthened and refreshed by it, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. 5. That it is required of all who come to the Lord's Supper, to examine themselves concerning their repentance, faith, and charity.

A short account of each of these particulars may be sufficient for your understanding of them; and then I will address myself to you in the way of exhortation.

1. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, so called from his appointing it at his

his last supper with his disciples was ordained for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ. Or, as St. Paul says, that thereby we might shew the Lord's death till He come. 1 Cor. xi. 26. that is, continually, by a solemn use of it, as a most sacred part of christian worship, to the end of the world. That as Christ, just before his death, sum'd up all the divine instructions of the Bible, and all his own, as it were in one great point: And instead of the Sacrifices and Ceremonies both before and under the law, which all pointed to Him, instituted a visible sign and token of his body broken, and his blood shed for us; to fix our eyes and hearts upon the precious means of our redemption, and give us a standing assurance of our reconciliation with God by the blood of his cross. So we should ever remember, and be well aware of it, as the chief end of his coming; the ground of our hope and religion, as christians. That we should see and confess the infinite evil, and damnableness of all sin, in this severe instance of God's displeasure against it; and every one of us in particular that sin in ourselves, which nailed the Son of God to the cross; and be so affected with a sense of his love in giving

himself to die for us, as to unite our hearts in a sacred bond of gratitude to him; and embrace all opportunities of testifying and confirming our faith in his propitiatory death and sacrifice: and expect all such benefits from this solemn rite of commemoration, as it was intended to signify, and convey to us. Which we are here told,

2. Is nothing less than the body and blood of Christ. Not in the bread and wine; as if they were changed into the real substance of his body and blood; but under them; as a lively token and similitude of what Christ is to all true believers. Whose body and blood notwithstanding,

3. Are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful. You need not stumble at this expression, if you call to mind what Christ himself so strongly inculcates, and repeats so often in the 6th chap. of St. John, viz. *That except we eat his flesh, and drink his blood, we have no life in us* Christ's flesh and blood is himself. And unless he is wrought into us, so as to become the ground of all spiritual life in us, we are dead to the king-

kingdom of heaven. And must for ever continue so, for want of that resurrection-principle—to newness of life here, to a capacity of endless bliss hereafter—which he is to all who are grafted in him by faith. See *John* xv. 1—8.

So that if our Church had not taught us, that the faithful do truly, and to all saving purposes, receive the body and blood of Christ; or Christ himself, as the author of a new spiritual life, the father of a heavenly nature in us, as Adam was of the earthly—understand it by, and with the spirit, which comes with him, and is inseparable from him—it would have concealed from us a very important, and awakening point of our religion. When we know that in our best estate we are altogether vanity; and have nothing in our selves but death and corruption, till the Son of God bids us live; how natural will it be to cry out, *Wretched man! who shall deliver me?* Romans vii. 24. And to say with Peter, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life* John 68. iv.

I would not be understood as if I thought that what Christ says, *John*, vi. chapter,

of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, was meant only of a sacramental eating and drinking; or as if there was no time and way of receiving life from him, but by partaking of the Lord's Supper. For as he is first received by faith, so the life of a christian is a continual feeding on him, and growth by him. And I verily believe, whoever thinks chiefly of *Him* as his *Daily bread*, when he says the Lord's Prayer, asks nothing but what Christ directed us to pray for, and intends to give.

But then, as he instituted this ordinance for a memorial of his death and passion, and of all the benfits we receive by *Him*: As the bread broken, and wine poured out, is a lively emblem, or speaking picture of his body broken, and blood shed for us: And being taken into our mouths, and converted into the nourishment of our bodies, of the spiritual nourishment we draw from him: and as we do then more especially, and in the most solemn manner profess our faith in, and dependance upon, him for all his benfits: we therefore believe, with good reason, that the constant devout use of this Sacrament is not only necessary in virtue

virtue of the command—*Do this in remembrance of me*; but also that it has an extraordinary blessing attending it; brings us to a nearer union with Christ; increases our graces; and in a more especial manner,

4. *Strengthens and refreshes our Souls; as our bodies are by the bread and wine.* It is so apt a similitude, and so easily understood, that it is needless to multiply words to explain it. Only fix it deeply in your minds once for all, that as the body is fitted to receive its proper nourishment, and must die for want of it; so by the fall we have lost the image, or life of God in our souls; and must have it restored to us in Christ. And when it is restored, it must be maintained, and kept up by continual supplies from him; and by a due preparation of our hearts and souls to receive him.

5. Consider therefore that it is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper, *to examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; whether they have a lively sense in God's mercies in Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his*

death ; and be in charity with all men ; that is, whether they have indeed any spiritual life in them ? Of which repentance, faith, and charity are unquestionable signs. And wherever they are real, can proceed from no will, wisdom, or strength of our own ; but are undoubtedly the work of God's spirit in us. *John xv. 5. Phil. ii.*

13.

Understand then, that *Repentance* is a continual, humbling sense and apprehension of our state and nature, as displeasing to God before our conversion, and effectual calling ; and, at the best, always imperfect :

That it is a knowledge and belief of sin, as the greatest of all evils ; as our curse and death ? the cause of our separation from God ; and exposing us to a sentence of eternal damnation :

That it is true inward shame and concern, not only for all our open wilful sins ; but also for the dreadful alienation of our hearts from God ; as the greatest of all sins, and the root of all sin in us :

And

And that therefore it is not only a turning from sin, but turning to the Lord; not only a forsaking of one or more gross sins, merely because of the mischiefs and inconveniences they bring upon us in this world; in which sense many turn from sin in some degree, who never turn to the Lord; but an earnest desire and will to have the bent of our hearts changed from earth to heaven, from the world to God.

Understand that *Faith* in one meaning of the word is a belief of the bible, as God's method of delivering us from sin; and the revelation of his will for our salvation:

In another, it is our acceptance of, and closing with this method; from a full conviction of the expedience and necessity of it:

In another meaning of the word, and that the most material, and what our catechism here chiefly fixeth our thoughts upon, it is a lively sense of God's mercies in Christ; that is, of our being reconciled to God through Christ, working at the root of all we do; fixing us in love,

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and hearty obedience to him, and bringing on a change of our tempers and affections.

And *Charity* is a gracious spirit of love to all mankind ; promoting us upon all occasions to forbear, and forgive ; to pity our fellow creatures, and help them in their distresses ; so to hate the sins of all, as to hate the persons of none ; but to do all the good we can to the souls and bodies of all men.

But tho' I have told you what repentance, faith, and charity are ; and shewed you the mark which all true christians are continually aiming at ; yet I do not think that none should come to the communion but such as are possessed of these qualifications in the highest, or in a very high degree. Sincere repentance, and turning to God undoubtedly there must be ; because, without it, there is no possibility of coming to Christ for the forgiveness and renovation that is by him. But then our faith in him, though weak, and sometimes assaulted with doubts and fears, may nevertheless be a true faith. And our charity, or love, though it does not come up to St. Paul's description of it, *1 Cor. xiii.*
may

may be in a growing state. If none were to come to the sacrament but those who are absolutely perfect, none must come. It was ordained for our confirmation, and improvement in these, and all other graces; that therein we might remember Christ as the author and finisher of our faith; and put in our claim to his benefits: Not by a declaration of our perfection, but by pleading our weakness and unworthiness before him; as we then do in an humble confession of our sins. And therefore God forbid that any who have found out their sin and their Saviour; and desire to be found in him, that they may not only be reputed but made holy by him; and wish as much to be delivered from the power, as punishment of sin; I say again, God forbid that they should be hindered, or hinder themselves from coming to the holy communion.

I would now close all I have to say to you at this time upon the catechism, with calling upon you to examine yourselves concerning your willingness and preparation to receive the sacrament as often as you have opportunity; to consider

sider your disposition in this matter, as a test of your christianity; and so far an infallible mark to judge of your religious state by, as that in the want of it you cannot be christians. Christ, you know, commands it; St. Paul tells us, that this shewing, this manner of setting forth the Lord's death, and declaring our faith in it, is to continue to the world's end. The chief points of christian knowledge are contained in it; our privileges, our duties, our comforts, are therein signified, and conveyed to us. The *christian covenant, the christian faith, the christian obedience, the christian prayer*, are summed up and represented in it; enforced, or exercised by it. God's *covenant of peace* to mankind in the blood of his Son: our feasting at his table, in token of our *faith* in him, and dependance upon him, for the pardon of our sins, and our acceptance with God: The offer and presentation of our *obedience*, of ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God: especially in that part of it, which Christ himself lays so peculiar a stress upon as to make it the badge of our discipleship, and love to him, viz. charity, or unfeigned, universal love: and *devout application*

tion to the throne of grace for strength to do the will of God from the heart, in virtue of our union with Christ, and by power derived from him: these, I say, are the great points of this ordinance; the blessings or the business of it.

Can you call yourselves christians, and yet think this sacred action of eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ; in which all God's mercies are confirmed to us; and we make a tender to him of the best we have, our repentance, our faith, our thankfulness, our purpose of obedience, our earnest desire of reconciliation to, and union with him, in and through Christ Jesus; I say, can you think it of so little importance, as that you may turn your backs upon it when you please? Especially, as it comes to you stamped with the authority of heaven, and is the command of your dying Saviour? Alas! who can look upon the state of things amongst us without grief and shame! True it is, that very few in this, and other Parishes, are constant communicants; much the greatest part of those who do come to the sacrament, oftener absenting; young persons and servants generally thinking themselves

selves unconcerned in it ; and some dying without having ever received it at all. Brethren, how shall I express my concern for your negligence in this matter, or find words to reprove it ? If this is not darkness in the midst of gospel light, ignorance of Christ, and spiritual deadness in a country, what is ?

You have no doubt of the necessity and benefit of remembraunce the death of Christ in the manner he hath ordained ; you condemn those who reject this sacrament ; and yet when you are invited to it, refuse to come. Is not this bearing witness against yourselves, that you have but little sense and belief of the blessing of a Redeemer ; that you are still unconverted, and under the dominion of a worldly spirit ; and prize other things a great deal more than the salvation he hath wrought for you ? If sin was a trouble, and a burden to you, could you slight any means or opportunity of being assured of the pardon, and delivered from the power of it ? Is Christ precious to you, and the bent of your heart towards him, and can you bear the thoughts of leaving it to others to feed upon his most precious body and blood ? Can you know and believe that

all

all your hopes are treasured up in him; and that if he does not stand betwixt the wrath of God and your sins, you must perish; and yet when he calls you to own him, and be owned by him, and receive fresh supplies of spiritual life at his hands, deliberately and often turn away from him? If you had an estate made over to you, upon the condition of performing and repeating a certain action, expressive of your love, and gratitude to the donor of it; and had reason to believe your title to it would be rendered precarious by a neglect of performance; which of you would ever neglect, or omit it? And if you did, would it not be a proof that you were indifferent in the matter, and in the main unconcerned about it? If Christ hath delivered us from eternal damnation, and purchased our title to the heavenly inheritance with his blood: and appointed this significant action of eating bread, and drinking wine together in remembrance of him; to engage our affections to him; to shew us the absolute necessity of receiving life and nourishment from him, and his purpose of giving it to us: can you persuade yourselves, that you are in good earnest seeking after his blessings, or desire his graces, when you will not vouchsafe

safe to look upon this sensible token and pledge of them, ordained by himself; and neglect so many opportunities of putting in for your share of them, and securing your title to them?

For the love of God, therefore, consider what you are doing in the world. Examine yourselves concerning your faith. If it was working at the root of your life, such a behaviour as this could never spring from it. And without faith, you may be honest, civil, and friendly; that is, good heathens, but are not good christians. See Rom. viii. 1—8. Heb. xi. 6. Jo. iii. 6.

And for want of that faith, which brings us hungering and thirsting to Christ. and especially in the way of this ordinance, pretences are multiplied under the name of scruples, for abstaining from it, which are never to be satisfied. I verily believe that, few instances excepted, they may all be resolved into ignorance of Christ, and of our want of him; and secret unwillingness to close with him. And as to what many alledge of business, and want of time to prepare themselves as they ought; let them be exhorted to prepare themselves as much as they please, by a careful

careful inspection into the state of their souls, as our church directs. But then let them be told, that those who trust only in Christ, and long to know more of him, and to be made alive unto God by him, are never unprepared. And that without this faith and desire, and actual turning to God according to the Gospel, all other preparations is vain ; proceeds from a mistake ; and shuts them up in blindness and delusion, And whoever they are who come to the sacrament without having, or desiring to have an interest in Christ ; we are so far from encouraging them in it, that we declare aloud it does not belong to them ; and cannot help beseeching them not to mock God, and deceive themselves any longer. For all they do by their shameful abuse of this most sacred act of christian worship, is to bring disgrace upon the name and religion of Christ ; and put a fatal bar in the way of their own conversion ; by thinking they are entitled to the benefits of worthy receivers, when they are utterly unqualified for them, and do not indeed desire them.

And I do in conclusion once more beseech you all, dearly beloved, by your hopes of mercy, to consider and digest the

the instruction contained in our church-catechism under the several heads of the *christian covenant, faith, obedience, prayer, and sacraments*; that so you may examine the state of your hearts by it. The lot of the lower part of mankind would be hard indeed, if, as they are but too apt to alledge, they could not understand this, and all other necessary christian instruction. But let me observe to you again, if they do not, it is because they are not yet poor in spirit, and will not understand the truth of their condition. For till this is known, neither rich, nor poor, are capable of knowing any thing truly of Christ, and his religion; they can only prate about it, and turn it into an empty form. It goes full as hard with a learned man to understand how he is by nature born in sin, and *must receive the kingdom of God as a little child*, (*) as it does with any of you. But the work of grace in all must be laid

(*) Note 1. Little children, or infants, have but one appetite, know what they want, and can be quieted with nothing else, do what you will to them. 2. Young children have every thing to learn; are incapable of striking out a rule of conduct for themselves; and receive what is taught them with undisputing simplicity. O! that it were once so with us! Consider Psalm cxxxii. and 1 Pet. ii. 2.

deep

deep in this conviction. And by it, and by the Spirit of God working with it, the blessings of the gospel will soon be perceived by every man to be as suitable to his case, as meat and drink is to him, when he is hungry and thirsty; and as eagerly sought after. He will not only understand, but pray (*) his catechism devoutly. He will beseech God, as for his life to confirm to him his covenant of peace in Christ. To establish him in the faith of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and preserve him in faithful dependance on the ever blessed Trinity for the work of divine grace in his soul: to love God with all his heart, &c. and his neighbour as himself: to know his own weakness more and more; and be stirred up to cry mightily to the Lord for help: to live up to his baptism, by dying to sin; and to remember Christ's death in the sacrament of the Lord's supper, not only as his ransom from death, but as the price with which he has bought him into his service; that he may *glorify God in his body, and in his spirit, which are God's.* 1 Cor. vi. 20. And *not live unto himself, but unto him*

(*) See Bp. Kenn's Practice of divine love; which is an exposition of the church catechism in a continued strain of rapturous devotions.

which died for him, and rose again. 2 Cor.
v. 15.

And let us all pray continually that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of our understanding being enlightened; that we may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ Jesus when he raised him from the dead.

Eph. i. 17—20. Amen.

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